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Hello DEW Team & collaborators,

I'd like to have written a far more eloquent and planned email but given the last minute nature of writing, and parenting my unwell toddler, this is a very quick letter of support for creating a Biodiversity Act in SA.

I'm sure you all know the importance of the health and balance of our natural world, and that humans rely so much more than most of us realise on this extremely delicate system.

After working in conservation, climate and now disaster resilience, I've seen a great deal of depressing scenes, from mass land clearing, old growth logging, habitats destroyed for cheap and nasty housing, marine environments pillaged and then polluted, monsoon thicket torn up for land to be fracked. I've watched lonely trees stripped by hungry birds with no where left to go. I've seen half burnt koalas clinging to charcoal posts.
I've seen whole towns swept away, or burn to a crisp - unable to withstand the climatic events we are only making worse.

I've also had the great privilege of living for short times in the Flinders Ranges, on a boat in the Great Barrier Reef, in communities who depend upon the upwelling of the Great Southern Reef, in the bushy Adelaide Hills and now on the calm but somewhat marine-barren mid-coast of Greater Adelaide.
I have a strong personal dependency on nature for my wellbeing, I've witnessed its beauty and impact on others, in so many different ways - from health, to financial, to connection to culture and our inner children who still value wonder.

For some reason (probably capitalism and the false idea of endless growth), we've become disconnected from our home in the natural world and no longer value it, either for its services, or for its own right to exist without exploitation. And the reality that we live in means that we will continue to exploit nature for a while to come. But we must set some boundaries now, that we can build upon, to reclaim and recover the rich biodiversity that allows us to thrive on this planet.

In a disaster resilience lens, we know that heatwaves are the biggest killer in Australia, and that reducing heat islands can be managed a great deal by increasing tree canopy and maintaining green vegetation as ground cover. Similarly, mangroves can protect communities from the brutality of storm surges and coastal inundation. But random trees in isolation, without the functioning ecosystems that keep them healthy, are not able to thrive and live out their intended lifespan.
We must create guides, and examples of best practice, to aim for where we need to be as a broader community in terms of understanding, valuing, conserving and reintroducing biodiversity.

Some phenomenal work has been done in these areas by many people over many years, such as the WildEyre project that employed Aboriginal workers from Ceduna to collect seeds on country, and farmers to protect remnant vegetation and revegitate degraded paddocks with native trees and grasses.

Or the BioR project that brings in dozens of volunteers each year to the Monarto area to learn about habitat for small birds and mammals and plant out huge swathes of salvaged farm land to bring back biodiversity. There are too many more to name, but their efforts alone are not enough to hold back the tide of human development or human accelerated climate change.

We need a consistent approach to the way we decide what is appropriate development, what is too precious to lose, how we protect those places, how we create more, and what might they need to look like in the future to enable us to adapt to what's already here but much harsher on the horizon. The act must seek out First Nations people, knowledge, concerns and support for projects. It must consider climate change and how that may look for us and nature in the future. It must consider the needs of community but also providing clear information and decision making processes to help more South Australians get on board this push for Biodiversity. The act must be supported by good communication strategies, clear rationale, practical advice and incentives to implement it.

Anyway, this ramble of words is meant to convey that I support the introduction of a Biodiversity Act in South Australia, and implore you to create one with teeth so that can be drawn upon to challenge our current extinction and climate trajectory and the status qo.

Thank you very much for you work on this to date, I'll be keeping a close eye on how this progresses and supporting where I can.

Warm regards,

Cristel Chambers